

WIPP Quick Facts (As of 09-30-08)

6,903

Shipments received since opening

56,776

Cubic meters of waste disposed

105,480

Containers disposed in the underground

WIPP receives first shipment from ORNL



The arrival of TRU waste shipments to WIPP is standard business. But, a shipment from Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) on Sept. 25 captured national attention. It was the first of many shipments planned from Tennessee to remove TRU waste from ORNL.

"Safe, responsible cleanup is the bottom line," said DOE Carlsbad Field Office Manager Dave Moody. "While we make steady progress every day at WIPP, it is milestones like this that highlight the overall success of the DOE clean-up effort. I applaud the employees at Oak Ridge and WIPP, who have worked very hard to make this possible."

ORNL plans to make approximately 35 shipments of contact-handled TRU waste a year through 2013.



The first TRU waste shipment to depart from ORNL heads to WIPP.

"The first shipment began and others will follow until all transuranic waste is safely removed from Oak Ridge," said Gerald Boyd, manager of DOE's Oak Ridge Office.

WIPP transportation contractor Visionary Solutions, LLC made the first shipment, which included three TRUPACT-II shipping containers. They departed from ORNL Sept. 24 at 9:15 a.m. EST. After traveling more than 1,300 miles, the truck arrived at WIPP just after 10:00 a.m. the following day.

ORNL was established in 1943 to produce enriched uranium and carry out pilot-scale production and separation of plutonium for the World War II Manhattan Project. Today, Oak Ridge is one of the nations' premier laboratories for science and technology.

Celebrating safety



Congratulations to members of WTS' B Crew, who recently celebrated four years without a recordable injury. They have done great work during that time and are currently mining Panel 6.

Standing (l to r): Orin Garriott, David Franco, John Moffatt, Jeff Neatherlin, Blas Castaneda, Wes McCarty, Jim Stockton, Randy Wilson, Mike Nunley, Tommy Rascon, Jaime Quinonez and Travis Courson. Sitting (l to r): Richard Graves, Monty Autry, Kevin McIlwee and Gary Ashford. Not pictured are Paul Edwards, Al Hernandez and Melody Smith.

Roadwork in Texas prompts temporary route change

Road repairs in Texas prompted CBFO and New Mexico and Texas departments of transportation to seek an alternate route for TRU waste shipments from South Carolina and Tennessee to WIPP.

Currently, TRU waste shipments from the Savannah River Site and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory use Interstate 20 through Texas, then travel north on U.S. 285 into the state of New Mexico. However, a section of U.S. 285 in Texas is undergoing repair, resulting in weight restrictions for heavier commercial vehicles.

The temporary route will allow WIPP shipments to exit Interstate 20 at Big Spring, Texas, and travel north to Hobbs, N.M. WIPP trucks will use a bypass around Hobbs and travel west to the WIPP site. Temporary use of the route expires at the end of Dec. 2009, in accordance with a New Mexico Department of Transportation agreement.

"A number of options were reviewed," said Roger Nelson, CBFO chief scientist. "This route actually reduces the mileage through Texas and New Mexico. In addition, emergency responders along the route have already been trained on appropriate protocols for WIPP shipments."

WIPP congratulated on recent award

WTS employees at WIPP have been recognized by state and industry mining organizations for safety excellence. The New Mexico Mining Association and the New Mexico Bureau of Mine Safety recently honored WTS with several awards, including its 22nd consecutive Safe Operator of the Year award.

Inés Triay, former CBFO manager and current principal assistant deputy secretary for Environmental Management, sent words of praise by e-mail.

"Excellent news," said Triay. "Please pass along my sincere admiration and congratulations for a job well done to all."



The awards were accepted on behalf of WTS by Bob Kirby, John VandeKraats and Randy Galindo.

Also hailing the achievement was New Mexico State Senator Carroll Leavell.

"Please extend my congratulations to the management and all employees at the Washington TRU Solutions WIPP operation," said Leavell. "These types of safety awards do not come without serious dedicated effort."

The minimum criteria for the award included a frequency rate, or injury rate, below national average (national average for the mining industry in 2007 was 3.43) and no fatalities during the period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. Since there were no federal or state reportable injuries for that period, WTS achieved a perfect rate of zero.

Five groups within WTS were also recognized for having a zero frequency rate. The groups included: Integrated Waste Handling Operations, Underground Services, Hoisting Operations, Mining and Ground Control Operations and Maintenance Operations.



Back at WIPP, WTS Underground Manager Bob Kirby presents a plaque to Wayne Ingram, who accepted the zero frequency rate award on behalf of Hoisting Operations.

Interested in WIPP?

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Finally, WTS was also presented with the Safety and Health Innovator Award for heightening safety awareness at WIPP by promoting forklift safety, quarterly pre-Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) self-inspections, operations safety team meetings and other employee-involvement safety events.

The awards were given at the annual meeting of the New Mexico Mining Association in Grants, N.M. Repository Development Project Manager John VandeKraats, Underground Operations Manager Bob Kirby and Operations Safety Team member Randy Galindo accepted the awards on behalf of WTS employees.

“At WIPP, mine safety lays the foundation for our waste disposal mission,” says WTS President and General Manager Farok Sharif. “I’m very proud of our employees’ commitment to safety and pleased that they are being recognized for their great work.”

WTS crews completed mining activities in Panel 5 earlier this year and have begun mining Panel 6. Each panel at WIPP contains seven football-field-length disposal rooms. Disposal operations are currently underway in Panel 4.

Lights! Camera! Action!



NOVA Science Now was at WIPP September 24-26 to film a segment for an upcoming episode. The focus of the segment will be the discovery of 250-million-year-old cellulose fibers in salt inclusions. The discovery has scientific implications for the search for life on other planets (See [April 17, 2008](#) issue of TRU TeamWorks).

Groundwater discharge permit renewed

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has renewed the groundwater discharge permit for WIPP until 2013. The permit regulates the discharge of water from WIPP facilities and operations to lined ponds that protect groundwater resources.

The permit allows WIPP to discharge domestic wastewater, non-hazardous wastewater and storm water into 13 on-site, synthetically-lined ponds. The new permit also provides for increased daily discharge volumes to allow more flexibility in plant operations.

“This permit is the result of a positive year-long effort with the New Mexico Groundwater Quality Bureau,” said Jody Plum, DOE Carlsbad Field Office Permitting and Compliance acting director. “It provides a regulatory framework that protects human health and the environment, and supports plant operations.” The DOE submits a semi-annual compliance report to the NMED.

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The U.S. Department of Energy
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

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